

**1673-1873. An Address Commemorative of the Two Hundredth
Anniversary of the Discovery of Iowa By Marquette and Joliet,
June 17, A. D. 1673**

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These commissioners proceeded with their duties, and with their labors closed all official acts, as far as the state was concerned, in applying the proceeds of this land grant towards the improvement of the navigation of the river Des Moines.

This was a most magnificent grant, embracing some of the best lands in the state; and, if the proceeds had been judiciously and properly expended, would have made a great thoroughfare for steamboats, besides affording an immense water power for driving machinery. But, through the incompetency of managing the means, and the intrigues of designing men, the whole of the lands below the Racoon Fork, and a large quantity above, were disposed of, and but very little practicable good accomplished towards improving the navigation of the river.

1673 — 1873.

AN ADDRESS COMMEMORATIVE OF THE TWO HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF IOWA BY
MARQUETTE AND JOLIET, JUNE 17, A. D. 1673.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA, ON THE OC-
CASION OF THEIR FIFTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 23, 1873.

BY WILLIAM SALTER.

Gentlemen of the Historical Society:—

WE are assembled to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of the discovery of Iowa. It is wholly an event of authentic history, and entirely lifted above the haze of myth or uncertain legend.

Viewed geologically, our state, perchance, may be as old as any portion of the earth's surface that is lifted up above

the primitive seas, and may have risen as early from the realms of chaos and old night, when the edict first went forth, "Let the dry land appear." The hoary cliffs and bluffs that overhang our rivers and streams bear the marks of venerable age. Let science trace the epochs, and the periods of glaciers and drifts, through which Iowa has passed, and explain the order and conditions of ancient life upon our soil. We also occasionally stumble upon ruins and remains of human life in our borders—mounds, shell-heaps, and stone implements—of mysterious and obscure date. They tell no tale of the races that once dwelt here—whence they came, when they lived, whither they disappeared. Fuller research, closer observation, possibly, may yet reveal something more of their habits and states of life. But authentic history cannot pierce the veil, or claim them as in her province.

The veritable story of Iowa has the definite bound of just two hundred years, when the land we call our home first emerged from ancient obscurity into the light of history and civilization. We know for sure the very day and the very place where and when the light of modern civilization greeted our shores, and the eyes of men of European origin first beheld them. Let us recall the sunny June of two hundred years ago, see what was then seen and known, and observe the progress of discovery and settlement to the present time.

The half century immediately following Columbus's discovery of the new world was marked by many bold and daring adventures. At once came in quick succession the exploration of nearly the whole Atlantic coast, the discovery of the Pacific ocean, the conquest of Mexico and Peru, the discovery of the Amazon in its entire course, the discovery of the St. Lawrence, and the wanderings of De Vaca and the expedition of De Soto, in which those adventurers stood upon the banks of the lower Mississippi. No other equal period of time has brought so many lands to the knowledge of civilization.

Little further, however, was learned of the northern part of the continent in the next half century. Bitter jealousies, struggles, and wars, mainly growing out of questions touching the reformation of the church, occupied the nations of Europe. No permanent settlements were made upon the north Atlantic coast until the early part of the seventeenth century, when the English founded Jamestown, in Virginia, in 1607, and the French founded Quebec, on the St. Lawrence, in 1608. The settlement of various colonies soon followed, and hardy French adventurers early penetrated into the interior of the continent by way of the St. Lawrence and the great lakes.

Meanwhile, the discovery of the Mississippi by the Spaniards seems to have passed out of the world's mind, and been forgotten. Nothing whatever was known of the relations of the river to the continent. Spanish maps of that period indicate by petty lines various rivers as pouring their waters into the Mexican Gulf. One line, distinguishable from others only by the name, Rio del Espiritu Santo, has been taken to designate our great river. It was one hundred and thirty-two years after De Soto, before another European explorer recovered the lost knowledge.

The discovery of the upper Mississippi, and of the course of the entire river, was reserved for the genius of France. Missionaries of the society of Jesus from that country arrived upon the banks of the St. Lawrence in 1625, and in forty years extended their missions to the farthest shores of Lake Superior. It was by those missions, and by the ambition and enterprise of the French Governor and Intendant at Quebec (Frontenac, and Talon) that the valley of the Mississippi was brought to the knowledge of the civilized world. The discovery was on this wise, and these are the heroes of it: —

James Marquette was born in Laon, France, seventy-four miles north-east of Paris, in 1637, of an ancient and respected family. Entering the Society of Jesus in his 17th year, he pursued a full course of study and discipline, and

embarked in 1666 for New France, to labor for the conversion of the Indians. In 1668 he left Quebec for the country about Lake Superior, commenced a mission at Sault St. Mary's, and spent the winter of 1669-70 at La Pointe, near the western extremity of the lake. From Indians of different tribes, and particularly from those bearing the name of Illinois, who came to this station, which was not more than fifty miles from the head waters of the St. Croix and Chipewewa rivers, important tributaries of the Mississippi, he heard of the great river, the river of all the waters, was invited to go thither, and was fired with a generous zeal to prosecute discovery and missions upon its banks. Subsequently, he conducted a prosperous mission for two years at Mackinaw, upon the main land, near the island which now bears that name. In writing to his Superior (Dablon) from this mission, he reports many encouraging facts, and adds:

"I am ready, however, to leave it in the hands of another missionary, and go on your order to seek new nations toward the southern sea, who are still unknown to us, and teach them of our great God."

At the same time, the authorities at Quebec were earnestly intent upon exploration, and appointed Louis Joliet to go upon a voyage of discovery. He was a native of that city, where he had been educated in the Jesuit college. He had taken minor orders at the age of eighteen, but after a few years abandoned all ideas of the priesthood, and embarked in the adventures of the fur trade, in which he established a reputation for energy, sagacity, and force of character. He was now twenty-seven years of age, and proceeding on his way reached the mission at Mackinaw on the 8th day of December, 1675, and gladdened the heart of Marquette with the good news, that they had been designated to pursue the discovery together. It was a grateful reflection in the mind of the pious missionary, that this very day was the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, whose favor he had been constantly supplicating, that he might have grace to visit the nations on the Mississippi. He placed

the enterprise under her protection, and promised that if she gave them grace to discover the great river, he would name it Conception, and also give that name to the first mission he should establish among the new nations. As the winter wore away, they gathered what information they could from Indians who had frequented those parts, and from their accounts traced a map of the country, marking down the rivers and names of nations, and the course of the great river. They were not long in preparing their outfit of corn and dried meat, which constituted their whole stock of provisions, and set out with resolute hearts, on the 17th of May, 1673, having five Frenchmen in their company.

They played their paddles joyously along the shores of Lake Michigan and Green Bay, so happy that they had been chosen for this expedition, says Marquette's ingenious and beautiful narrative, as to sweeten the labor of rowing from morn till night. Ascending Fox river, they reached an Indian village on its banks on the 7th of June. This was the limit of the discoveries made in that direction by the French. Here they held a friendly conference with the chiefs, and explaining to them that Joliet was sent to discover new countries, and that Marquette's mission was to enlighten them with the gospel, they procured two Miami guides to conduct them to a portage, over which they might cross to the Wisconsin river. The guides led them along the marshes and little lakes through which the Fox river here meanders, and assisted in transporting the canoes from the waters which flow toward the St. Lawrence, to those that should bear the adventurers to strange lands. The guides then returned, leaving us alone, says Marquette, "in an unknown country, in the hands of Providence." Before embarking again, they began a new devotion to the Virgin, offering special prayers for her protection, and for the success of their voyage. Thus encouraging one another, they sailed down the river for seven days, a distance of seventy leagues, as they estimated, or two hundred and ten miles, when they reached the mouth of the Wisconsin, and on the

18th of June glided into the gentle current of the Mississippi, "with a joy that I cannot express," says Marquette.

Now their eyes rested—the first in authentic history, the first in civilization and Christianity—upon Iowa. They saw the bold bluffs that overhang our picturesque city of McGregor. Marquette's narrative speaks of them as a grand chain of high mountains on his right. They are about five hundred feet above the level of the river. The scene is impressive by its natural grandeur and beauty, and is forever memorable as the point of discovery of the upper Mississippi, and of Iowa, two hundred years ago.

Let us take our stand there, and then, in a moment's reverie, and look out upon the world and the state of civilization at that time.

These discoverers were representatives of the proudest kingdom and of the greatest monarch of that age. France was at the head of the nations, and Louis XIV. was France. "I am the State," was his maxim. While discovering the Mississippi on one continent, France at the same time was carrying dismay and terror on another into neighboring countries, and threatening the very existence of the Netherlands. The resistance, the patience, and the daring of William, Prince of Orange, afterward King of England, turned the tide of battle, and arrested the encroachment of ambitious despotism. As yet, England was convulsed with intestine feuds. The Stuarts had regained the throne, but had lost the confidence and respect of parliament and the people. Spain had declined from its splendor and power of the previous century, enervated and corrupted by the luxury and vice that followed its conquests and spoils in the new world.

Upon this continent, the settlements along the Atlantic coast were scattered and feeble. They extended but short distances into the interior, and were frequently in terror of the Indians. King Philip was still living in peace with the Plymouth colony, but two years later kindled the flame of a general Indian war, that excited gloomy apprehensions in

nearly every settlement in New England. More than thirty years later, Deerfield, in the valley of the Connecticut, and Haverhill, on the Merrimac, only thirty-three miles from Boston, suffered the horrors of Indian massacre and conflagration. In New York the Dutch and English were still at strife for the possession of that province. Wm. Penn had not yet crossed the Atlantic. Nine years later he came over, and laid out the city of Philadelphia. The colony of Virginia was sixty-six years old, but now numbered only forty thousand souls. The Carolinas had a population of four thousand. The city of Charleston was not founded until seven years later. A Spanish settlement had existed at St. Augustine, Florida, for a century, but it was still feeble, and memorable chiefly as the home of intolerance, cruelty, and crime.

Thus, small and obscure, two centuries ago, were the beginnings of our country, when the valley of the Mississippi glimmered into view, and the discoverers of Iowa sailed along our shores. In their long voyage from the portage of the Fox and Wisconsin they saw no human being, and no trace of any, for fifteen days, until they approached what is the southern border of our state, on the 25th of June, when they perceived human footprints, and a beaten path upon the river bank. Following it a few miles they found a village of Illinois Indians, on the banks of the Des Moines. One of our chief poets has transferred "Marquette's narrative of their reception here into mellifluous verse, in the closing scene of the "Song of Hiawatha."

" Came a people

From the distant land of Wabun ;
From the farthest realms of morning
Came the Black-Robe chief, the Prophet,
He the Priest of prayer, the Pale-face,
With his guides and his companions.

“And the noble Hiawatha,
With his hands aloft extended,
Held aloft in sign of welcome,
Cried aloud and spake in this wise:
‘Beautiful is the sun, O strangers,
When you come so far to see us!
All our town in peace awaits you,
All our doors stand open for you;
You shall enter all our wigwams,
For the heart’s right hand we give you.
Never bloomed the earth so gayly,
Never shone the sun so brightly,
As to-day they shine and blossom
When you come so far to see us.’

“And the Black-Robe chief made answer,
Stammered in his speech a little,
Speaking words yet unfamiliar:
‘Peace be with you, Hiawatha,
Peace be with you and your people,
Peace of prayer, and peace of pardon,
Peace of Christ, and joy of Mary!’”

“Then the generous Hiawatha
Led the strangers to his wigwam,
Seated them on skins of bison,
Seated them on skins of ermine,
Brought them food in bowls of bass-wood,
Water brought in birchen dippers,
And the calumet, the peace-pipe,
Filled and lighted for their smoking.
All the old men of the village,
All the warriors of the nation,
Came to bid the strangers welcome;
‘It is well,’ they said, ‘O brother,
That you came so far to see us.’”

On the 30th of June the explorers proceeded on their voyage down the river. In due time they observed the muddy waters of the Missouri pouring into the Mississippi with tumultuous flood, and proceeded as far as the mouth of the Arkansas river, where they turned about, and passing up the Illinois river crossed over to Lake Michigan.

Thus in this month of strawberries and roses, two hun-

dred years ago, the world's modern life began to dawn in the valley of the Mississippi, and these shores were greeted by representatives of one of the chief powers of Christendom. Religion and commerce came hand in hand, with auguries of peace and promises of blessing for the vast central region of the continent. So far as concerns the living history of the Mississippi valley, it begins with Marquette and Joliet, and with the discovery which we now commemorate and honor. The expeditions of De Vaca and De Soto of the previous century were wholly barren of results, like the discovery of the continent by the Northmen in the tenth century. But other explorers soon followed Marquette and Joliet. Seven years after, in 1680, Hennepin, a Franciscan missionary, passed along the whole eastern shore of Iowa, ascending the Mississippi from the Illinois river. He was the first explorer of the Mississippi above the Wisconsin river. Two years later, La Salle entered the Mississippi from the Illinois river, and passed down to the Gulf of Mexico. On the 9th of April, 1682, he unfurled the banner of the king of France at the mouth of the great river, and in the name of his sovereign took formal possession of the whole country watered by it, and by all the rivers that flow into it. In this act he named the country Louisiana, and the Mississippi, Colbert river, in honor of Louis XIV., and his distinguished minister of finance; names that Hennepin also used in his "Description of Louisiana," published at Paris, in 1683. Marquette in his map fulfilled his promise, and named the Mississippi Conception river, though his journal always speaks of it as the Mississippi.

And so this mighty valley, lying between the Allegheny and the summit of the Rocky Mountains, embracing about one-fortieth part of the land surface of the globe, and constituting, in the language of an illustrious Frenchman of this century, De Tocqueville, "The most magnificent dwelling place prepared by God for man's abode," came into the hands of France. Its colonization was soon attempted under the royal auspices. La Salle was fitted out, in 1684, with an

expedition of four ships, and two hundred and eighty souls. Louis XIV. contributed more for its support than all the kings of England ever gave for the colonies on the Atlantic. It was a larger company, and vastly better equipped, than settled Virginia, in 1607, or came over in the Mayflower, in 1620. But divided counsels and various misadventures and disasters attended it. Blundering in the Mexican Gulf, they missed the mouth of the Mississippi, and landed in Texas. Their misfortunes fill a dismal page in the annals of the colonization of America. Finally, La Salle was assassinated by some of his associates. At this same period, the revocation of the edict of Nantes turned the attention of the Huguenots to Louisiana, and they begged the privilege of planting themselves upon the banks of the Mississippi, with liberty of worship. But the king replied, that he had not banished the Protestants from France, to make a republic of them in America.

The colonization of the Mississippi valley by the French, extending over a period of ninety years from Marquette's discovery, resulted only in a few feeble and precarious establishments. It was at one time associated with the wild speculations of John Law, that led France into universal bankruptcy, and made the name, Mississippi, a synonym for disaster and fraud, suspicion and disgust. But no French settlement reached the shores of Iowa. Here was still the seclusion of nature. Though the earliest discovered part of the Mississippi valley, and as attractive as any, the settlement of it was long deferred, and its fortune in history was determined by events and occurrences far remote.

The jealousies and wars of Europe extended to every colonial settlement in America. There were early misunderstandings between the French and Spanish on the Gulf of Mexico. At a later day, the English colonies on the Atlantic laid claim, on the ground of charters, and treaties with the Indians, to country on tributaries of the Mississippi, that France claimed by virtue of discovery. To vindicate their claims, the English built a stockade, in 1754, at the

junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, where Pittsburg now stands, but were driven from it two months afterward by the French, who held the position against several attacks for more than four years. In one of those ineffectual attacks (July, 1755), George Washington first gained public distinction, and was preserved amid merciless exposure to become at a later day the father of his country. An attack three years later was successful, and the following year the victory of Wolfe over Montcalm at Quebec, Sept. 13th, 1759, gave Canada to Great Britain, blotted out the name of New France, and caused an entire reconstruction of the map of America. As a result of treaties, the territory now constituting our state, with the whole of Louisiana lying west of the Mississippi river, and the city of New Orleans, were ceded to Spain. At once, the English settlements, that had already been commenced at the head waters of the Ohio and its tributaries, spread westward rapidly, and, though often interrupted by Indian wars, steadily increased in numbers and strength. The growth of their commerce and trade, under the government of the United States, brought especial importance and prosperity to New Orleans, notwithstanding the colonial policy of Spain was illiberal and unfriendly. President Jefferson warmly espoused their interests, and was stimulated by their defiant and resolute spirit to take measures for the purchase of New Orleans and of Louisiana. Originally, the purchase of New Orleans only was had in contemplation. Meanwhile, by a secret treaty (Oct., 1800), Louisiana was retroceded to France. Afterward, before formal possession was taken (Nov. 30, 1803), France sold it to the United States (April 30, 1803), for eighty millions of francs, and the transfer was made at New Orleans with appropriate ceremonies, December 20, 1803.

The country west of the Mississippi was at that period regarded as too remote and barren to be of much value. When the American minister at Paris (Robert R. Livingston) was asked by Talleyrand, the prime minister of Napo-

leon, the first consul, if the United States wished to have the whole of Louisiana, he replied in the negative, and stated that they only wanted New Orleans and the Floridas. Talleyrand observed that if New Orleans was given up, the rest of Louisiana would be of little value, and he requested an offer for the whole country. But Mr. Livingston felt that this inquiry opened a larger field than his instructions covered, nor did he see how the United States could pay for so much territory, though he suggested raising the means by selling the land to some European power, the United States retaining the sovereignty. Napoleon was on the eve of a war with England. He feared that the mistress of the seas might seize Louisiana. And he wanted money. He was therefore eager to sell. The cession was received in the United States with great favor, though not a few opposed it, as unwarranted by the constitution, and as imperiling the federal Union by such an extension of boundaries. Said Mr. Livingston, with prophetic vision, "The treaty will change vast solitudes into flourishing districts. From this day the United States take their place among the powers of the first rank. This treaty will prepare ages of happiness for innumerable generations. The Mississippi and Missouri will see them succeed one another, and multiply, truly worthy of the care and regard of Providence, in the bosom of equality, under just laws, and freed from the errors of superstition, and the scourges of bad government."

Thus for one hundred and thirty years after its discovery, the territory now composing the state of Iowa remained under the dominion, first of France, then of Spain. During this period the savage roamed over our prairies, and the trader occasionally coursed up and down our rivers. But the land lay in innocence of history. No European institution found here a foothold. The prairie flowers bloomed and wasted their sweetness on the desert air. No mortal eye is known to have observed with any distinctness what capabilities and resources of a great state were here slumbering. But elsewhere, events were shaping, that should

bring here the fruits of the world's ripest life, and create a great and powerful state in the heart of the continent.

At only two points in Iowa are any traces left of the dominion of the Spaniard, viz: at Dubuque and Montrose.

Julien Dubuque was a native of Canada, and came to Prairie Du Chien when a young man, and obtained permission of the Fox Indians, about the year 1788, to work the mines surrounding the city that now bears his name. In 1795, the Spanish Governor, Carondelet, it is reported, confirmed the privilege. Here Dubuque spent his life, engaged in mining and trade, until his death in 1810. No grant of land was made him, and a claim to a grant was decided adversely by the supreme court of the United States, in 1854.

Towards the close of the last century, Lewis Tesson (*alias* Honore), a Canadian, came down from Prairie Du Chien to the head of the lower rapids, among the Sacs and Foxes, at their invitation, and established a trading post. The Lieutenant Governor of Upper Louisiana (Zenon Trudeau), gave him permission (St. Louis, March 30, 1799), to settle there, with the concessions of a sufficient space "to make the establishment valuable and useful to the commerce of peltries, to watch the Indians, and keep them in the fidelity they owe to their Majesty." He lived there with his family several years, surrounded his establishment with picket and rail fences, erected buildings and a trading house, planted gardens, and an orchard of a hundred trees. Falling in debt at St. Louis, the whole property was seized (March 27, 1803), under the Spanish law, and sold at public sale at the door of the Parish church in St. Louis, at the conclusion of high mass, the people coming out in great number, after due notice given, in a high and intelligible voice by the public crier of the town, on three successive Sundays (May 1st, 8th, and 15th, 1803). On the first Sunday, the only bid for the property was twenty-five dollars. On the second Sunday, thirty dollars was bid. On the third Sunday, at the third and last adjudication, one hundred dollars was bid, and subsequently one hundred and fifty dollars, by Joseph

Robidoux, Tesson's creditor, "which was repeated until twelve o'clock at noon; and the public retiring, the said Robidoux demanded a deed of his bid. It was cried at one o'clock, at two o'clock, and at three o'clock, and no other persons presenting themselves, the said land and appurtenances was adjudged to him for the mentioned price of one hundred and fifty dollars, which sum, having to receive himself, he gave no security."

I have stated these particulars, because they illustrate the manners and business of seventy years ago, and because this grant and sale constitute the oldest legal title to land in Iowa, and are the only acts under the Spanish administration and law that have affected the disposition of any portion of our soil. They were confirmed by the United States, and sustained by the supreme court, against those holding under other claims, in 1852.

Through the courtesy of Henry W. Starr, Esq., of Burlington, who defended their claims in the courts, I am permitted to exhibit on this occasion the patent to the land referred to, given by the United States, and signed by President Van Buren, February 7, 1839. (It is the earliest patent given by the United States to any land in the State of Iowa.) And also a copy (translation) of the original permit given by Governor Trudeau of Spanish America, and of the legal process, from which I have quoted.

The formal transfer of Upper Louisiana to the United States was made at St. Louis, March 10th, 1804, and our eastern and western borders soon saw the stars and stripes unfurled upon their shores. Lewis and Clark ascended the Missouri in 1804, and Pike, the Mississippi, in 1805, on exploring expeditions. The land remained in the occupation of the Indians until just forty years ago, the first of this month, when the Indian title to a narrow strip of our territory lying along the Mississippi was finally extinguished, and that portion of the country was opened to civilization and settlement by the whites. From that day to the present, Iowa has witnessed a rapid, and continual, and surpris-

ing growth. Admitted as the twenty-ninth state of the American Union in 1846, it now numbers a population of more than a million and a quarter, and in the census of 1870, stood in the eleventh rank, with respect to population. In forty years the hand of industry and the genius of enterprise have reaped out of this soil vast stores of wealth, and by the surprising and unexpected openings of the country west to the Pacific, we are found to occupy a most advantageous and commanding position for intercourse and commerce with the whole globe. Greatness and honor, opulence and fame are within our grasp. Here, too, we fondly hope and believe, the ripest ideas of the centuries have come, and there is some real advancement in the development of a higher civilization, with purer manners, nobler laws, a better culture, and grander forms of order, freedom, society, and life.

Divine Providence gave it to the French to discover this land, and possess it ninety years, and to Spain to own it for forty years, but reserved its settlement to be accomplished under the genius of American institutions and laws. And now that a fair beginning has been made, and a happy civilization is budding and blooming all over the state of Iowa, it remains for the present, and for the coming years, to unfold here one of the noblest and grandest chapters in the book of time, in all departments of human industry, in the culture of the earth, in commerce, in invention, in church and school, in science, in art, in literature, and in social and political order.

Advance, then, ye future times, ye coming millions, sons and daughters that still slumber in the creative purpose, receive your inheritance of a free and mighty commonwealth; guard, enrich, and perpetuate it to the final consummation; and here let man be lifted up to the highest virtue, happiness, and glory, allotted to his earthly state!

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